

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-1604**

January 21, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Secretary Kerry:

It is of course welcome news that four hostages returned home from Iran. It is a stain on our nation's honor when our countrymen languish unjustly in foreign prisons. However, we still have countrymen languishing in Iranian prisons. Further, the timing and details of the U.S. cash transfer of \$1.7 billion to Iran indicates it might be a ransom payment and it is likely interpreted as such by our adversaries. We may be seeing a dangerous precedent in action as three Americans, reportedly kidnapped by Iranian-backed Shia militias in Baghdad, remain missing.

We all welcome home Marine Amir Hekmati, Pastor Saeed Abedini, and journalist Jason Rezaian. After meeting with one of the hostage's families, I understand even more clearly the torture that some of these U.S. citizens underwent and the torment that this wrought on them and their loved ones. Americans rejoiced when these families were reunited.

As to the fourth American hostage that was released, Nosratollah Khosavi-Roodsari, I am concerned that Congress and the American people were kept ignorant of his arrest. And we still have no details on his background, how long he was held hostage, or why he elected to stay in Iran after being released. This raises the question: how many other U.S. citizens is Iran actively holding?

We are still awaiting news of Bob Levinson, a former FBI agent, who went missing in Iran in 2007. His family is dealing with unspeakable agony due to his absence. I share the concerns of many who are anxious to know if he is alive, in Iran, and if the Iranian government is sharing all information with us. Similarly, for businessman and American citizen Siamak Namazi, we have heard very little on the U.S. government's efforts to get him out of prison. I do not know why the U.S. government did not secure his release with the other hostages.

When announcing the release of the Americans on January 17<sup>th</sup>, President Obama also informed the world that the United States was, on that same day, settling a 35 year-old financial dispute with Iran. Many find this timing suspicious. Adhering to the processes of an international tribunal, he announced the U.S. would be paying the Islamic Republic of Iran \$1.7 billion—made of up an initial \$400 million claim and \$1.3 billion in interest.

Although the \$400 million claim stems from an agreement that was with an entirely different government in Iran, the previous pro-American administration, we have decided to go forward and fund the current regime, which still chants “death to America.” This \$1.7 billion is in addition to the more than \$100 billion that Iran will shortly receive in sanctions relief and the 21 Iranians that we pardoned or dropped sanctions on in a rare move.

After trading five Taliban commanders detained at Guantanamo for one American and after freeing three convicted Cuban spies for one American, I fear this payment is the latest incident that is establishing a dangerous precedent that will lead to more Americans being captured abroad. In fact, an Iranian military commander connected to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) said the \$1.7 billion and hostage release were connected: “a bid to buy [the] freedom of [U.S.] spies held by Tehran.”

Several questions still remain and your clarification in writing would be helpful:

1. What is the relationship between the \$1.7 billion payment and the release of the hostages? The White House Press Secretary said “this is not a coincidence.” However, one day earlier, you said it was “absolutely a coincidence.”
2. Did the \$400 million claim or the \$1.3 billion interest payment ever come up, explicitly or vaguely, in conversations with the Iranians about the release of American hostages?
3. What is the source of the funding for the \$1.3 billion interest payment? Are U.S. taxpayers funding this payment? If the Treasury Department’s Judgement Fund is the source of this \$1.3 billion, is it taxpayer-funded?
4. Why aren’t the 52 Americans that Iran held hostage for 444 days starting in 1979 being compensated with this money, instead of all of it going back to Iran? If Iran will not compensate victims of its terrorism, then the U.S. government needs to intervene—not send this money right back to Tehran.
5. The State Department said that “there are still outstanding Tribunal claims, mostly by Iran against the U.S.” How much money does Iran assert we still owe them? How many more billions can we expect the Obama administration to hand to the Ayatollah?
6. Did you secure an assurance from the Iranians that they will not use this \$1.7 billion to fund terrorism?

Rather than this being a “good deal for taxpayers” and a way to “[make] the American people safer” as the Obama administration has asserted, I fear this \$1.7 billion payment is just the latest, and most definitely not the last, example of President Obama’s capitulation toward the mullahs.

Sincerely,



Mike Pompeo  
Member of Congress